



No. 19

WESTERN ADVENTURES



# TIM HOLT

10¢



in this issue  
**"They Dig by Night!"**  
a Ghost Rider thriller!

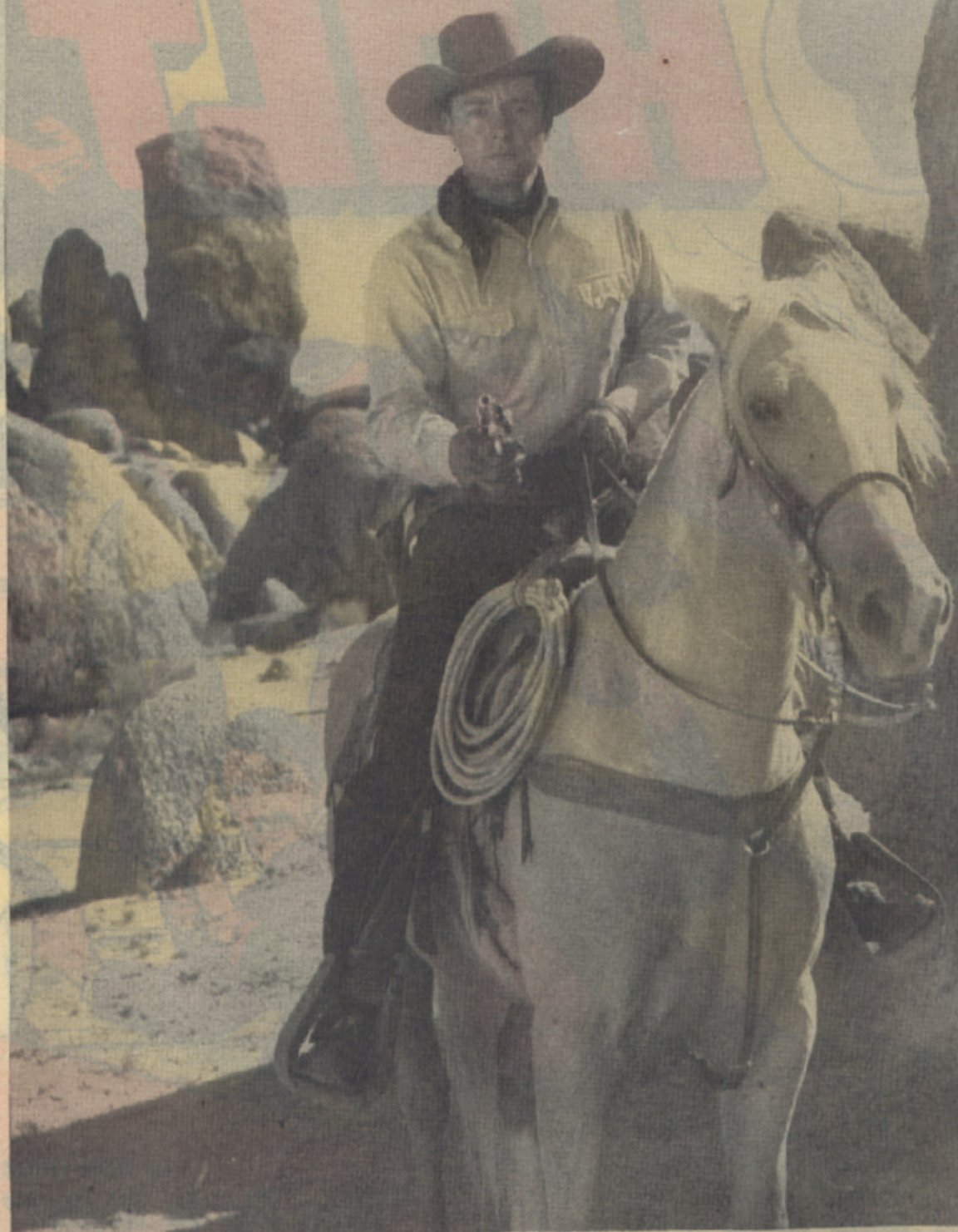




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# TIM HOLT



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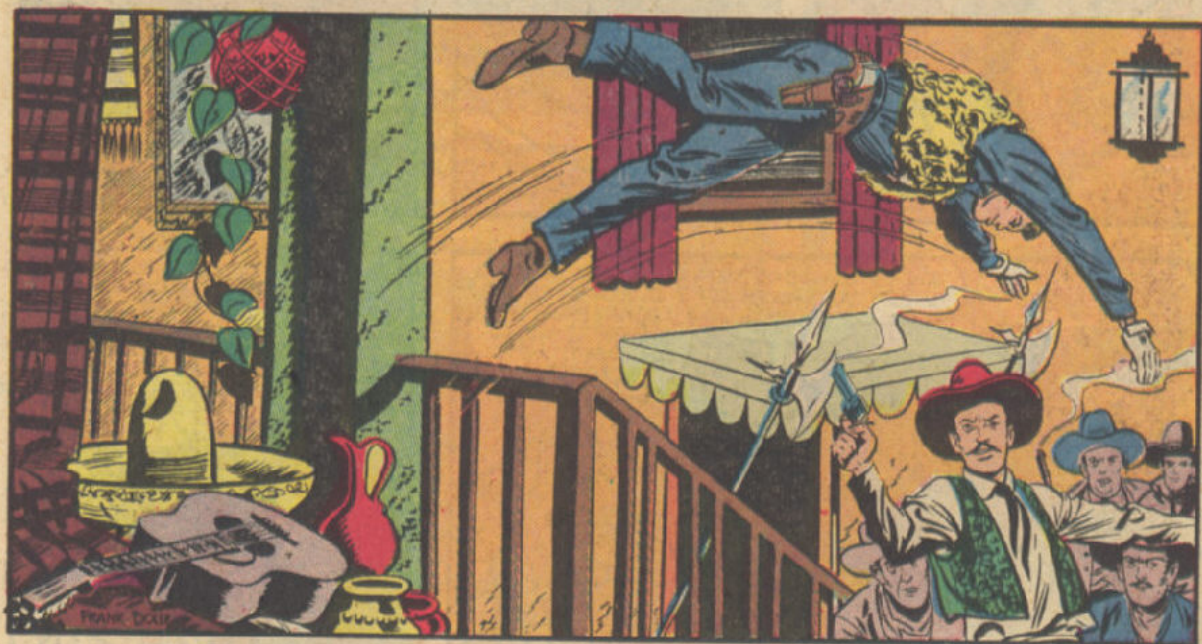


TIM HOLT

# TIM HOLT

THE BITTER BREATH OF DEATH BLOWS HOT AND COLD FOR TIM HOLT, AS HE BATTLES BULLETS, BLIZZARD AND THE TREACHEROUS HOSPITALITY OF A RUTHLESS KILLER, TO SAVE THE LIFE OF A MAN HE NEVER MET! HERE IS THE STORY... THE STORY OF—

**"THE  
EFFICIENT  
MURDERER!"**



AS A LATE SPRING SNOWSTORM RAVAGES THE NORTHERN SLOPES OF THE GRAND WASH ...

THAT MAN DOWN  
BELOW—HE'S HURT  
BAD!



HUH! LOOKS AS IF HE'S  
HAD A CASE OF LEAD  
POISONING—JUDGING BY  
THOSE HOMBRES WHO  
ARE SHOOTING AT HIM!  
... STEADY, LIGHTNING!





# TIM HOLT

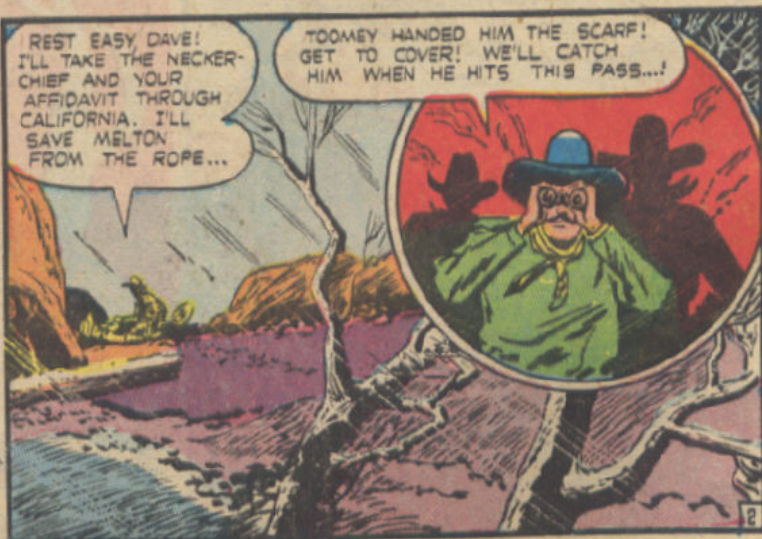


IN A HOARSE, PAIN-WRACKED WHISPER,  
TOOMEY POURS OUT HIS STORY...

MELTON DIDN'T KILL DON CARLOS  
D'ESTELLANTE... WHITE NECKERCHIEF I  
HAVE BEARS... BLOODPRINT OF KILLER'S  
HAND... WITH ODD OVAL SCAR ON IT.  
I PICKED IT UP AT SCENE OF CRIME.  
DIDN'T SEE REAL KILLER'S FACE...  
BUT HE SENT MEN AFTER ME... TO  
KILL ME. HAD TO FLEE INTO...  
ARIZONA...

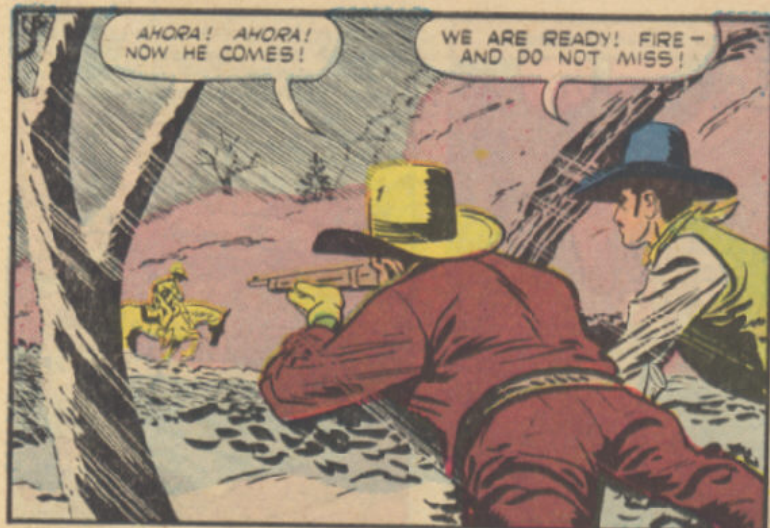
REST EASY DAVE!  
I'LL TAKE THE NECKER-  
CHIEF AND YOUR  
AFFIDAVIT THROUGH  
CALIFORNIA. I'LL  
SAVE MELTON  
FROM THE ROPE...

TOOMEY HANDED HIM THE SCARF!  
GET TO COVER! WE'LL CATCH  
HIM WHEN HE HITS THIS PASS...!





# TIM HOLT

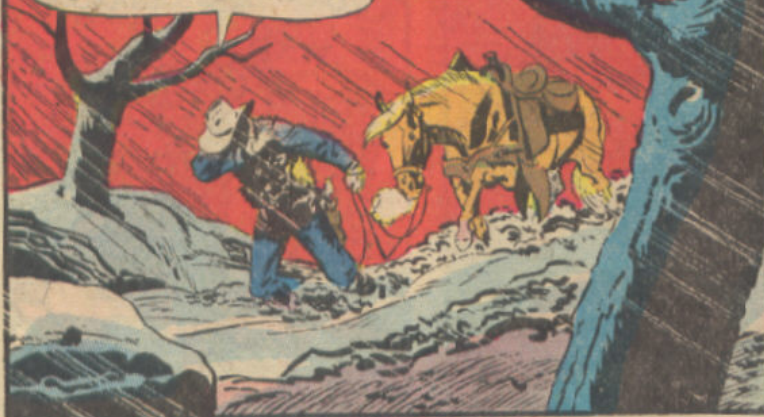




# TIM HOLT

THE BITTER, INTENSE COLD BITES THROUGH CLOTHES AND SKIN...

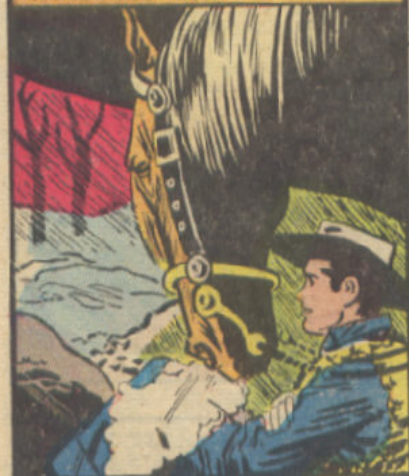
GOT TO... FIND SHELTER SOON... OR FALL...  
BE FROZEN TO DEATH...



THAT ROCK OVERHANG... A LITTLE  
SHELTER FROM THE WIND AND  
SNOW! MAYBE... OUR BODY HEAT...  
WILL KEEP US WARM...  
ALIVE...



AND, AS THE FIERCE WIND HOWLS,  
BLASTING THE CUTTING SNOW BEFORE  
IT AND PILING IT IN GIANT DRIFTS, TIM  
AND THE GREAT GOLDEN STALLION LIE  
HUDDLED TOGETHER...



MEANWHILE, JUST MISSING THE  
BLIZZARD, SIX KILLERS EMERGE  
INTO THE SUNNY VALLEYS OF  
LOWER CALIFORNIA. SOON THEY  
FACE HAWK-FEATURED DON  
ESTEBAN SOROLLA—

SOP. ANOTHER COMES WITH THE  
BANDANNA, EH?... WELL, IF HE  
LIVES THROUGH THE STORM, HE  
WILL REQUIRE FOOD AND SLEEP.  
MEET HIM! INVITE HIM HERE!  
HE WILL GET THE SLEEP HE  
NEEDS—THE SLEEP OF  
DEATH!



TRUST DON ESTEBAN  
TO THINK OF SUCH  
A THING!

HA! HE WILL  
COME LIKE THE  
PIG TO THE  
BUTCHER'S  
KNIFE, NOT  
SUSPECTING!



AND SO—

POOR FELLOW!  
WERE YOU  
CAUGHT IN THE  
BLIZZARD?

YOU WILL  
WANT  
FOOD, EH?  
SLEEP?

FOOD? SLEEP?  
I'VE FORGOT-  
TEN  
WHAT  
THEY  
ARE!



MANUEL! CARLOS! BRING A  
CHAIR! FETCH FOOD FOR OUR  
VISITOR!

THANK YOU, SIR! I'VE HAD A  
ROUGH TIME... BACK THERE!





# TIM HOLT

AFTER A HEARTY MEAL, DURING WHICH TIM RELATES TO THE WRILLY SMILING DON ESTEBAN THE PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT...

SLEEP WELL, SENOR! I WILL SEND A RIDER TO EL TORO ORO TO HALT THE HANGING OF SENOR MELTON UNTIL YOU ARRIVE WITH THE PROOF SENOR TOOMEY GAVE YOU...

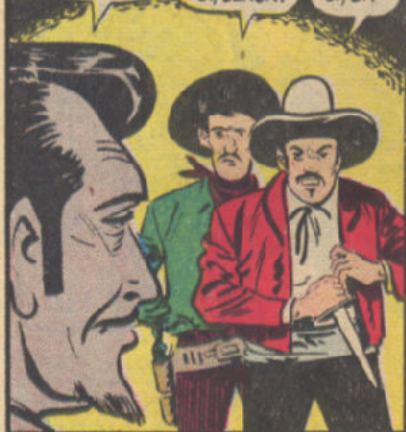
SENOR TOOMEY? WHY? HOW...?

YES... SLEEP WELL! NO ONE KNOWS THAT I KILLED DON D'ESTELANTE. IF IT WERE NOT FOR THAT ACCURSED WHITE NECKERCHIEF HE ALWAYS WORE... ON WHICH IS THE IMPRINT OF MY SCARRED PALM... NO ONE WOULD EVER KNOW ANYTHING!



IF OUR GUEST DIES, I WILL BE SAFE! MANUEL—BE SURE HIS DREAMS END FOREVER! CARLOS, RIDE YOU TO EL TORO ORO. TELL THE ALCALDE TO HURRY THE HANGING!

SI, SENOR! SI, SI!



AS DARKNESS BLANKETS THE CALIFORNIA VALLEY, A SHAFT OF MOONLIGHT GLISTENS ON A DRAWN DAGGER AS A HAND PUSHES OPEN A HEAVY OAKEN DOOR...

I HAVE REMOVED MY BOOTS SO THAT MY BARE FEET WILL MAKE NO NOISE TO TO WAKE OUR GUEST!



SUDDENLY—

YIIIIII!!!



I WAS RIGHT! DON ESTEBAN KNOWS MORE ABOUT MY MISSION THAN I TOLD HIM! HE KNEW TOOMEY'S NAME—AND I NEVER MENTIONED IT! SO I PUT THOSE CACTUS LEAVES ON THE FLOOR, AND SLEPT UNDER THE BED...



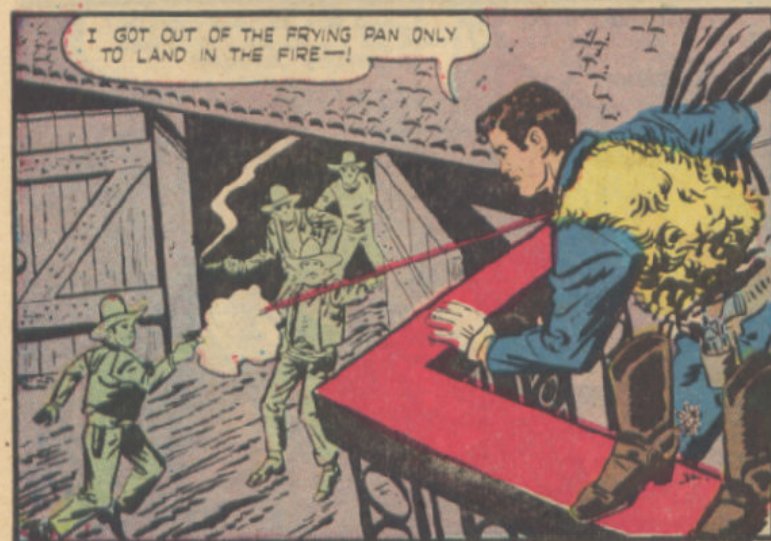
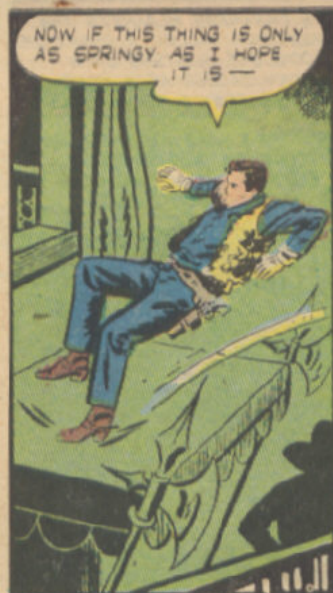
MY BACK! MY BACK! I AM STABBED BY A THOUSAND KNIVES! AAAGHHH!

...AND DON ESTEBAN WOULDN'T HAVE ME KILLED UNLESS I WAS DANGEROUS TO HIM!





# TIM HOLT





# TIM HOLT



A DRAPE-CORD FASTENED TO A BOOT—THE BOOT WHIRLED AND THROWN UPWARDS—A BIG SILVER SPUR CATCHING ON A ROOF-EDGE...

ONLY HOPE...ONE OF THEIR BULLETS ... DOESN'T HIT THAT CORD!



BUT THE HORSES OF THE DON ARE NO MATCH FOR THE POWERFUL LEGS OF THE GREAT PALOMINO...

THE REST WAS ALL YOU NEEDED, BOY! NOW—KEEP DIGGING!



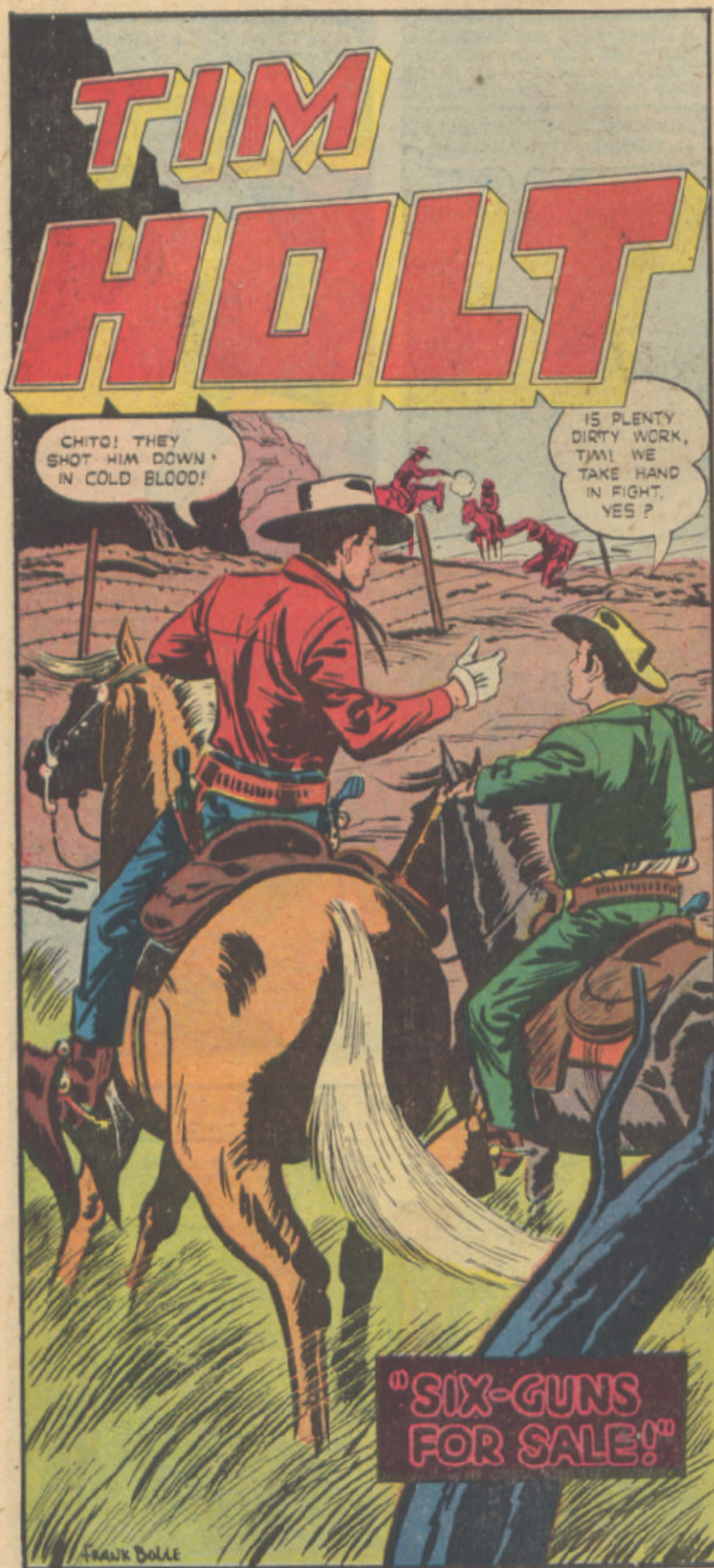
AND SO, AS TIM PRESENTS HIS PROOF, ORDERS ARE GIVEN IN THE ALCADE'S CRISP VOICE—ORDERS THAT TELL TIM HIS JOB IS—WELL DONE!

FREE MELTON! BRING IN DON ESTEBAN! THIS IS HIS HAND PRINT. I WOULD KNOW THAT SCAR ANYWHERE! HE—INSTEAD OF MELTON—SHALL STRETCH THE ROPE!



THE END







# TIM HOLT





# TIM HOLT





# TIM HOLT



WHILE THE PROFESSIONAL KILLER IS BEING BROUGHT IN, TIM AND CHITO RIDE OVER THE RANGE, STUDYING THE COURSE OF THE RIVER THAT BRINGS LIFE-GIVING WATER TO THE VALLEY.





# TIM HOLT





# TIM HOLT



EES IT THAT I AM A DUMMY!  
YOU TALK OF PLAN, PLAN, PLAN!  
BUT I DO NOT UNDERSTAND!

IT'S REALLY  
SIMPLE, CHITO!



THIS STRETCH OF THE RIVER IS  
ON MY RANCH—THE BANK HERE  
IS LOW AND WEAK. IF I  
BLOW IT UP, THE WATER  
WILL FLOW THROUGH THE  
GAP INTO THE LOWLAND  
ON THE OTHER SIDE  
THE COURSE OF THE  
RIVER WILL CHANGE.

AH!  
HOLY  
SMOKES!



THE RIVER, SHE WILL BE FOR TO  
FLOW **AROUND** SANDERS' LAND!  
THEN **HE** WILL WATER  
NOT HAVE! EES VERY  
SMART IDEA, TIM!  
VERY SMART, NO?

VERY SMART,  
YES! NOW  
LET'S GET  
OUT OF  
HERE, PRONTO!



THERE IT GOES, CHITO! NOW  
THE CATTLE WILL HAVE PLENTY  
OF WATER... AND  
MR. DUKE SANDERS  
WILL HAVE TO DO  
SOMETHING  
DESPERATE IF HE  
PLANS TO DRIVE  
THE RANCHERS  
OUT OF THIS  
VALLEY!

AND  
WHEN HE  
DOES,  
**WE**  
WEEEL BE  
WAITING  
FOR HIM.  
SI!

SOME HOURS LATER, ON DUKE SANDERS' RANCH...



WELL, IT'S TRUE! TIM HOLT'S  
BLASTED THAT RIVER OUT OF ITS  
COURSE! NOW **I'M** WITHOUT WATER!  
A FINE MESS YOU  
IDIOTS HAVE MADE  
OF THINGS!

BUT, BOSS,  
WHAT COULD  
WE DO? THAT  
GUY'S ALWAYS  
TWO JUMPS AND  
A HOP AHEAD  
OF US!



WE'RE GOING TO DO PLENTY! I'VE HIRED  
YOU COWPOKES BECAUSE EVERY ONE OF  
YOU IS SUPPOSED TO BE MORE HANDY  
WITH A GUN THAN A BRANDING IRON!  
WELL, FROM NOW ON, YOU'RE USING  
YOUR SHOOTING IRONS!  
**GET MOUNTED!**



WE'RE GOING TO SHOOT AND  
BURN EVERY RANCHER OUT OF THIS  
VALLEY—STARTING WITH TIM HOLT'S  
T-BAR-H! **LET'S GO!**



# TIM HOLT



SOME MINUTES LATER, AS SANDERS' DESPERADOES CHARGE THE T-BAR-H...



AS THE BLOODY BATTLE RAGES...





# TIM HOLT





# the GHOST RIDER



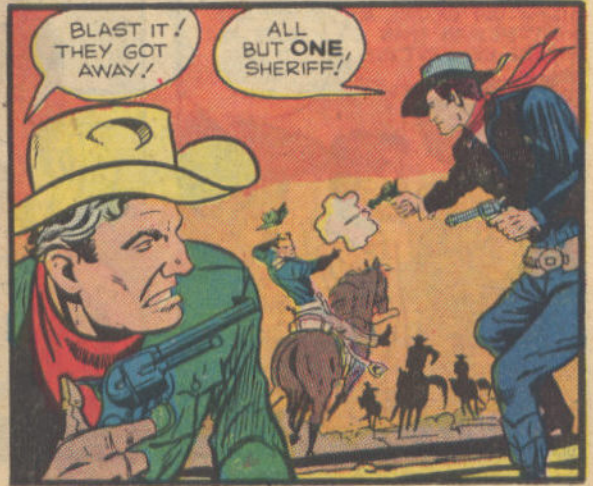
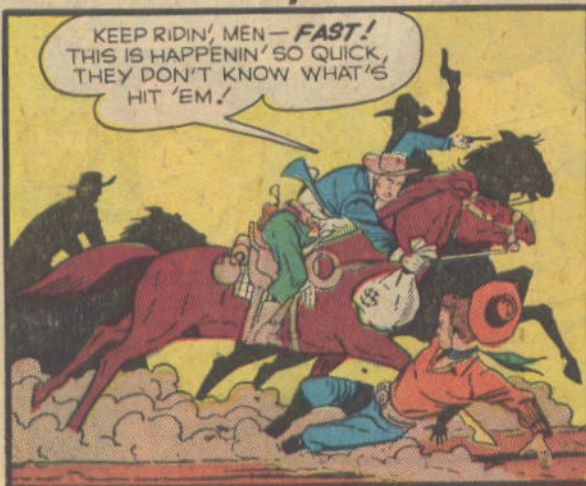
**I**N ALL THE ANNALS OF WESTERN CRIME, THERE IS NOTHING MORE GHOULISH THAN THE TALE OF THE OPENED GRAVES AT MIDNIGHT! THE MONSTERS WHO VIOLATED THE GRAVEYARD WERE SO GREEDY THAT THEY WOULD NOT PERMIT EVEN THE BONES OF THE DEAD TO REST IN PEACE...! READ HOW THE GHOST RIDER COMES TO GRIPS WITH THIS GRISLY HORROR IN—

**THEY DIG BY NIGHT!**

ONE DAY, AS A NEW SHIPMENT OF GOLD BULLION IS BEING CARRIED INTO THE BANK...

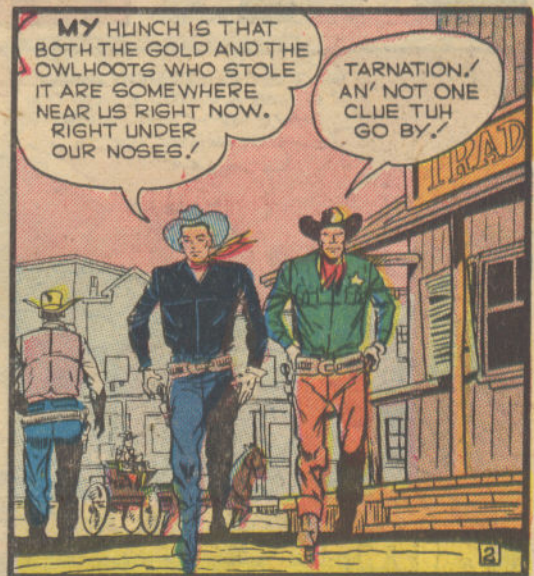
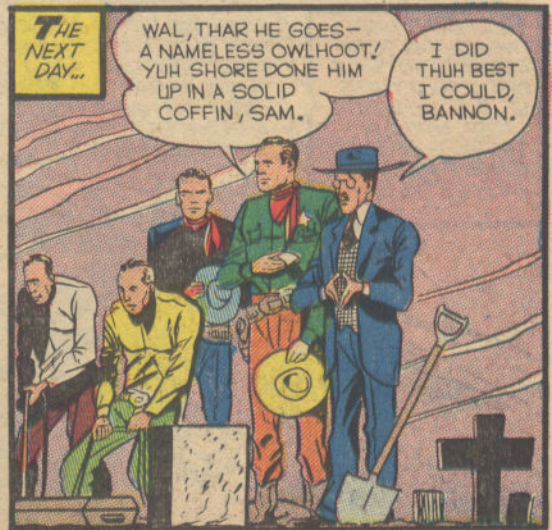
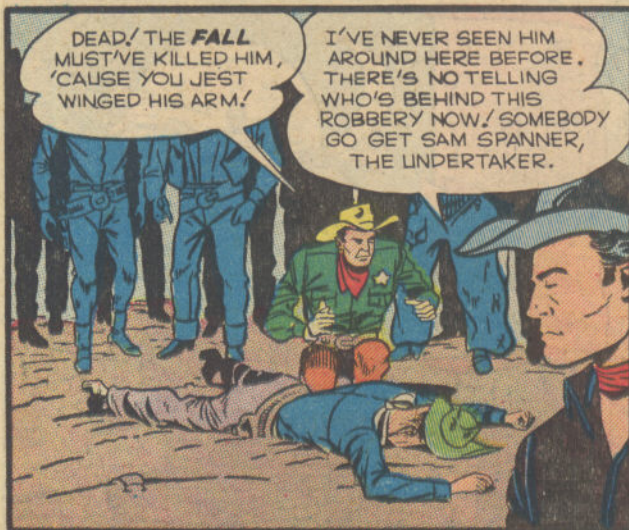
IT'S A ROBBERY!

TARNATION! WHAR'D THEY COME FROM SO SUDDEN?





# TIM HOLT

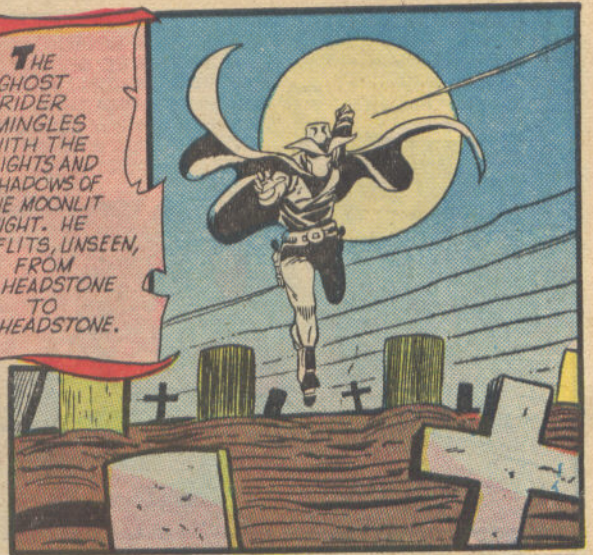




**REX FLURY IS RIGHT. TWO MONTHS GO BY AND STILL NO TRACE OF THE GOLD TURNS UP. BUT TWO MONTHS LATER, AS REX, IN THE GUISE OF THE GHOST RIDER, PATROLS THE NIGHT.**

STRANGE!— THE SOUND OF IRON ON STONE COMING FROM OVER THAT HILL! BUT THAT'S WHERE THE GRAVE-YARD IS! WHAT WOULD ANYONE BE DOING THERE AT MIDNIGHT?

**THE GHOST RIDER MINGLES WITH THE LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF THE MOONLIT NIGHT. HE FLITS, UNSEEN, FROM HEADSTONE TO HEADSTONE.**



THESE MEN ARE DIGGING UP A GRAVE! WHAT A SACRILEGE!



**CEASE YOUR GHOULISH WORK! CANNOT THE DEAD REST IN PEACE?**

**YEOW! A GHOST!**

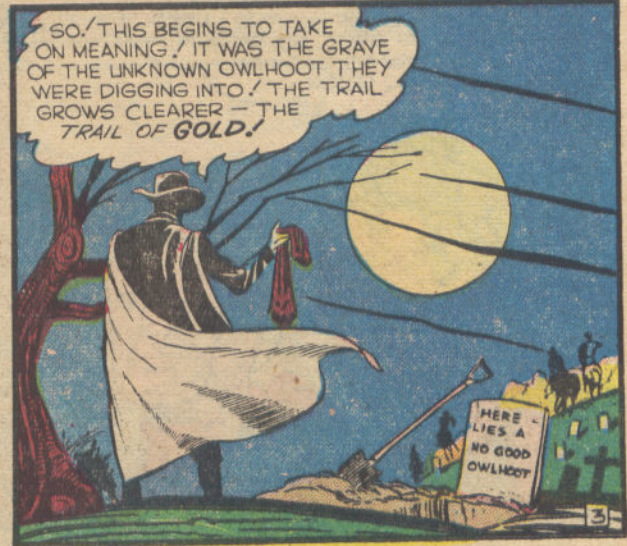


THE GHOST RIDER WILL TEACH YOU RESPECT FOR THE DEAD! ONLY THE LOWEST OF SCOUNDRELS WOULD ROB A GRAVE!

**QUICK, MEN— LET'S GIT OUTA HYAR!**



THEY'RE SLIPPING AWAY! IT WAS A MISTAKE NOT TO HAVE MY HORSE, SPECTRE, NEARBY!



SO, THIS BEGINS TO TAKE ON MEANING! IT WAS THE GRAVE OF THE UNKNOWN OWLHOOT THEY WERE DIGGING INTO! THE TRAIL GROWS CLEARER— THE TRAIL OF GOLD!

HERE LIES A NO GOOD OWLHOOT



# TIM HOLT

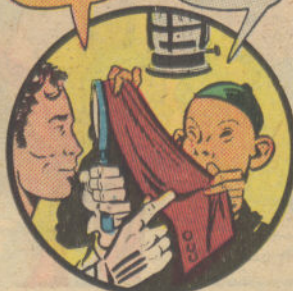
LATER - IN THE BACK ROOM OF A LAUNDRY...

THIS IS THE ONLY CLUE - THE SLEEVE ONE OF THOSE GHOULS LEFT IN MY HANDS.

ME THINK CHEMICAL ANALYSIS TELL STORY OF EACH BOWL OF SOUP THIS SLEEVE, HE DUNK IN. SOON FIND CLUE, MEBBE!

I THINK WE HAVE SOMETHING HERE, SING-SONG. SEE THOSE MANY GRAINS OF RED ALONG THE SEAMS? IT'S DIRT - RED DIRT - AND THE STAINS ARE MONTHS OLD.

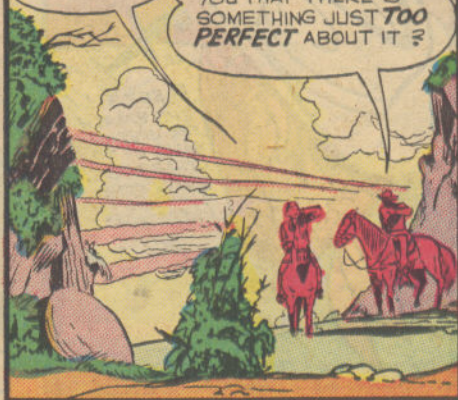
RED DIRT! HA - THE ONLY PLACE SUCH EARTH IS FOUND IS ON TOP OF RED HILL, YES? MEBBE WE GO TAKE LOOK-SEE, NO?



THE NEXT DAY, SING-SONG AND REX FURY GO EXPLORING AROUND RED HILL...

MEBBE FALSE ALARM, REX. NO CAN FIND OWLHOOT HIDEOUT IN THIS HILL.

MEBBE WE'RE LOOKING FOR THE WRONG THING, SING-SONG. TAKE A LOOK AT THAT BUSH THERE - DOESN'T IT STRIKE YOU THAT THERE'S SOMETHING JUST **TOO PERFECT** ABOUT IT?

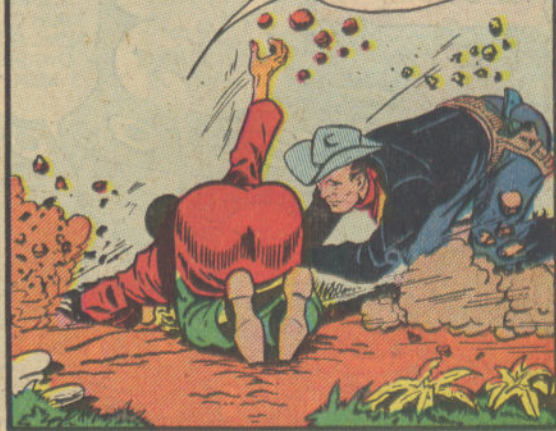


SEE HOW EASILY THIS BUSH COMES OUT? - AS THOUGH IT'S BEEN PLANTED ONLY RECENTLY!

YES - AND GRASS IS CAREFULLY TRANSPLANTED! REX, ME THINK SOMEBODY DIG HERE AND THEN TRY TO HIDE IT UP!



THE GOLD, REX! I BETCHUM IT THE GOLD!



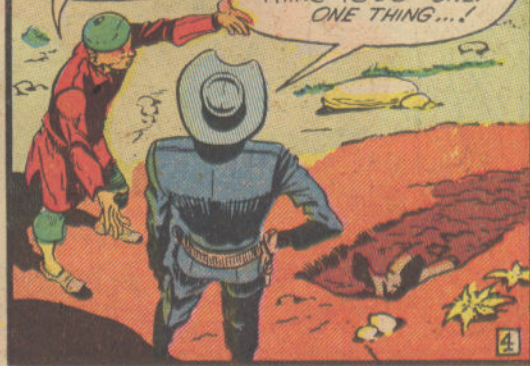
GULP! A CORPSE!

AND IT'S THE UNKNOWN OWLHOOT WE BURIED IN THE CEMETERY! THAT IS - I **THINK** WE BURIED HIM...



BUT, REX, IF OWLHOOT IS HERE IN THIS HOLE - THEN **WHO** AND **WHAT** IS IN THE GRAVE?

I DON'T KNOW, SING-SONG. JUDGING FROM LAST NIGHT, SOMEBODY WANTS TO GET INTO THAT GRAVE MIGHTY BAD, TOO. WELL, THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO - **ONLY ONE THING**...





# TIM HOLT

**NEXT MORNING — SHERIFF BANNON FINDS A STRANGE NOTE PINNED TO HIS OFFICE DOOR ...**

JUMPIN' JEHOSEPHAT!  
NOW WHUT YUH  
THINK OF THET?

FAREWELL!  
THE SEARCH  
FOR JUSTICE  
CALLS ME TO  
OTHER LANDS.  
I HAVE DONE  
MY WORK  
HERE

*The  
Ghost  
Rider*

SHERIFF BANNON  
BIG TALKER, CANNOT  
KEEP STORY TO  
HIMSELF. HE SURE  
SPREAD NEWS  
FAST.

I'M COUNTING  
ON THAT,  
SING-SONG.  
BY TONIGHT,  
THERE WON'T  
BE ANYONE WHO  
HASN'T HEARD  
THAT THE GHOST  
RIDER HAS  
PULLED OUT.

AND THAT'S JUST  
WHAT WE WANT.  
WHOEVER IT WAS THAT  
DUG INTO THAT GRAVE  
THE OTHER NIGHT WILL  
THINK IT'S SAFE  
ENOUGH TO TRY  
AGAIN! BUT — THEY  
WILL FIND THAT THE  
GHOST RIDER IS  
VERY MUCH  
PRESENT!

SALOON

**THAT NIGHT, THE  
CEMETERY .....  
MIDNIGHT BRINGS  
PROOF OF REX  
FURY'S SHREWDNESS ..**

I SHORE HOPE  
THE GHOST RIDER  
MEANT WHUT HE  
SAID WHEN HE  
WROTE THET  
NOTE!

GULP!  
WHUT WUZ  
THET?

JEST AN  
OWL, YUH  
DOPE!  
HYAR  
WE BE AT  
THUH GRAVE  
NOW. START  
DIGGIN'  
MEN.

THIS  
GRAVE-DIGGIN'  
SHORE AIN'T TO  
MUH FANCY.

AW, SHET UP!  
THAT AIN'T NOTHIN'  
TUH BE SKEERED OF,  
NOW THET THUH  
GHOST RIDER AIN'T  
AROUND. HA! I JEST  
FELT THE COFFIN UNDER  
MUH SHOVEL. CLEAR IT  
AWAY, MEN, AN'  
HOIST 'ER UP.

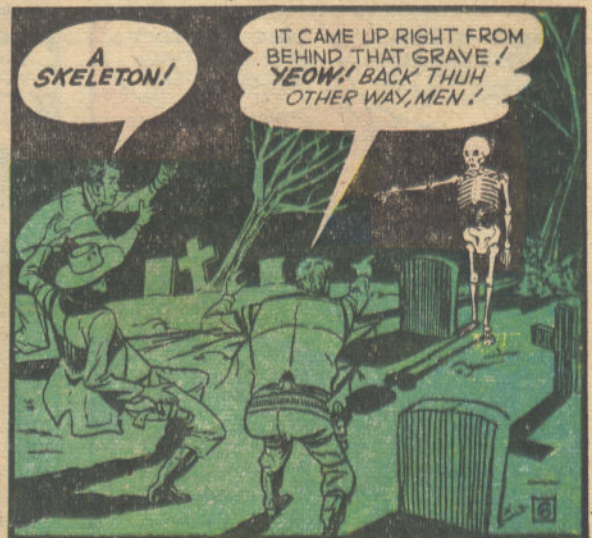
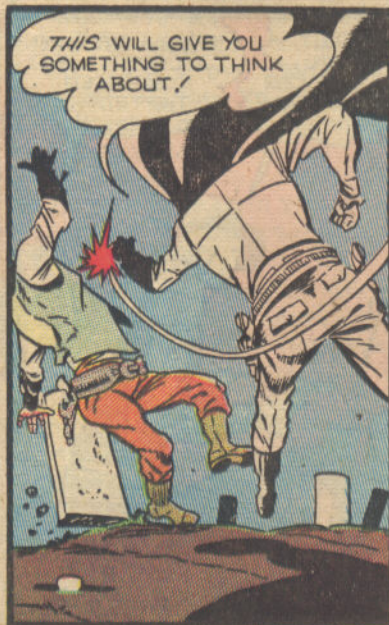
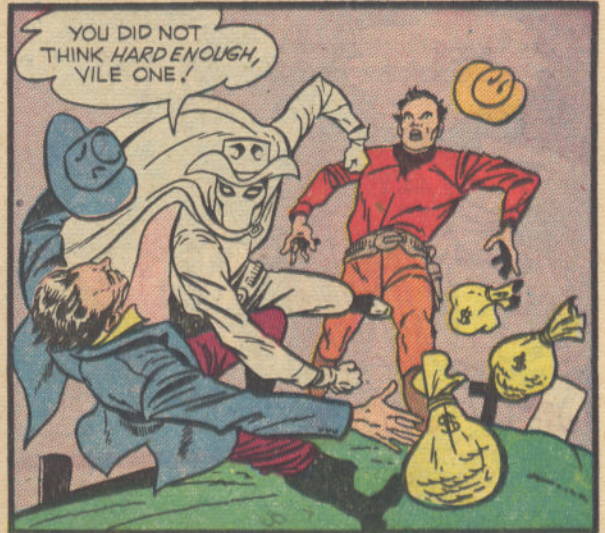
C'MON, PUT MORE  
MUSCLE BEHIND THAT  
CROWBAR / GIT  
IT OPEN!

THAR IT IS —  
ALL OUR GOLD!  
SAFE AS WHEN  
I PUT IT IN!

WE GOTTA HAND  
IT TUH YUH, BOSS—  
YUH SHORE PUT IT  
OVER ON THEM!

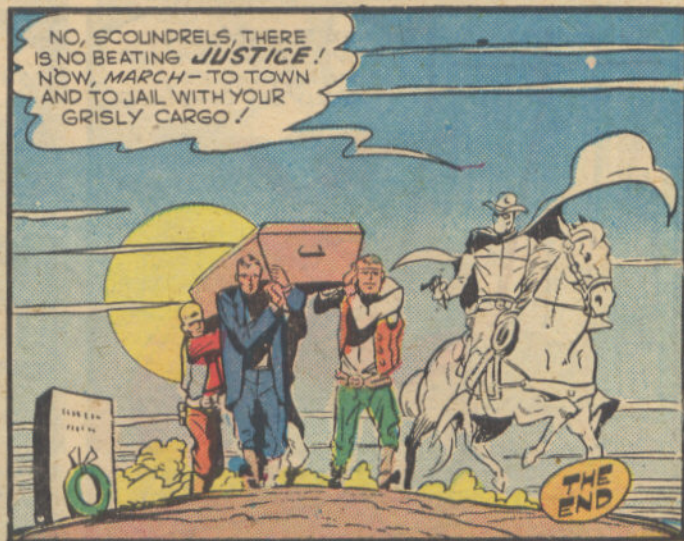


# TIM HOLT





# TIM HOLT





# BULLETS FOR THE BADMEN

**J**IM Perkins triggered his Colt Peacemaker just as the last of the road-agents who had robbed the baggage car of the stalled Kansas-Pacific train drove spurs into his mount's sides. He climbed to his feet, brushing his black Stetson back on his unruly yellow hair. His sixgun made a weight on his hip as he dropped it into his holster. He looked down the length of the train where the limp body of the baggage-car messenger lay sprawled in the hot sunlight.

Jim walked down past the cars, eyes alert on the ground for anything the gun-slicks might have dropped, that would give him a clue, any sort of clue. The only thing he found, under the open baggage-car doors, was a length of splintered wood, with the black numerals, 32, on it. Idly he bent his tall body, lifted the wood and put it thoughtfully into a pocket. All around, the passengers were bending over the messenger, helping him to his feet.

"Just grazed my shoulder," growled the messenger. "Jumped me 'fore the train had stopped."

"What'd they get?" asked the soft-spoken Perkins.

"Couple boxes ammunition bound for Fort Cobb. That's all."

Jim swung back onto the train, just as a warning whistle from the steam-spewing engine belched into the hot sageland air.

Sheriff Tom Howland was a short, stocky man, with the remains of two meals still staining his blue whipcord vest. He looked up sharply at the tall length of Texas Ranger Jim Perkins, swinging gracefully from the K.P. passenger car. Sunlight spotted the ranger badge on Perkins' coat, and made it glint.

Swiftly, Sheriff Howland crossed toward Jim, hand outstretched. "Just heard about the holdup. I'm Howland, sheriff here at Trinidad."

Jim nodded, swallowing the smaller man's pudgy hand in his long fingers. He let a smile sit on his lips. "Heard you were having a mess of trouble with the Mesa Colorado bunch. I ran into 'em myself, a while back."

The sheriff fell into stride with Jim as they went across the dusty main street of the little cowtown and into a dirty, fly-specked restaurant, where half a dozen cow-hands and miners sat wolfing food. Jim dropped on a counter seat, hooked his long legs behind the seat-post, and bent his cold eyes on the little sheriff.

"Think that was the Mesa Colorado bunch that held up the train?"

"Plumb certain of it," grated the sheriff. "Couple of the boys on the train—who know the Mesa bunch—identified them."

The Ranger nodded, drumming his fingers idly. His mind went back over these hot moments of the robbery, remembering in clarity now the heavy slamming of the guns, the shrill whine of lead bullets ricocheting off the engine boiler, hearing a woman's scream lifting up eerily amid the cursing of the men. He shook his head. There was something about the fight—something about what happened afterward—that kept annoying him. It was something that he should know. He had the facts, the important facts. But he couldn't put them together.

*It's like part of a dream that keeps slipping away from you, the more you try to remember it, he thought. Or like a half-broke bronc: leave him alone, and he'll come around. Go after him, and he'll run!*

Abruptly, he turned again to the sheriff. "I'll want a good horse."

The sheriff nodded. "Got two in my corral. Both mares. Fast, with plenty of gut to them." Then he looked up in surprise. "You ain't figgerin' on ridin' out after them so soon? Why, man, we've hunted that bunch for weeks! We know they hole up in the breaks, but we've never been able to get close." The sheriff scowled, and his jaw muscles worked. "Maybe it's a good thing. They'd cut us to ribbons in them canyons."

"They're rustlers. Killers. It's my job to go get them."

The little sheriff caught a look at the cold blue eyes set in the browned face beside him. Despite himself, and the heat of the restaurant, Sheriff Howland felt an icy chill run down his spine.

He let the piebald pony move across the sands, cool under the blue bowl of night sky. Whenever he could, Jim Perkins liked to ride in the darkness, with the heat of the day a thing of the past. Here in the chill night air, with a sheepskin coat keeping himself warm, a man could think, with only the twinkling stars and an occasional coyote howl to back-



## TIM HOLT

ground his thoughts.

This was another routine job, for Perkins. But he knew that all his cases had angles, facets. He had to know these facets in advance. If he had not always known them, a lead cylinder from a .45 or a .44, the typical western badman's gun, would have lodged in his rib case a long time ago. He was confident about his facts. But one thing kept bothering him—the elusive knowledge, like something from a dream, that he should have hit upon before now; that fact that kept running from him as a jackrabbit runs from a hound.

He made good time in the night's stillness, taking the piebald up a long slope rising gently from the lower levels into the higher country, that broke, as if under a giant's blow, into scattered ridges and rock canyons. It formed a natural labyrinth of volcanic rock and sandstone.

It was well into late morning when he sighted the plume of smoke lifting skywards from a small canyon to the west. He kicked the piebald to a steady run, until within an hour he was able to swing from the saddle a hundred yards above a small cabin set back in the shadow of a rock overhang.

Two men were in front of the cabin, mending a saddle. There were others inside, playing cards. Jim could see them through the window. He counted seven. Chuckling dryly, he slid his Winchester from the saddle sheath. There had been seven men in the gang who'd held up that K-P train yesterday and run off with that ammunition.

"Ammunition!"

His hand went to the splinter of wood he had picked off the ground and thrust into his shirt pocket. He took it out and stared at it, and he put a grin on his mouth and left it there.

"There'll be some fireworks plenty soon, bronc," he told the piebald who laid its ears forward. "Stick around!"

He sent his first shot into the saddle between the two men. They went backwards off their heels, hands going for their guns. One of them knelt, hunting with his eyes for the hidden marksman. Jim let him see the smoke curling up from his gun-barrel. A shot ripped the air over him and Jim Perkins laid the oiled, polished stock of his rifle against his cheek and rammed a .45-40 bullet into the road agent two inches above his knee. The man crumpled and lay still.

The other outlaw yelled and dove for the door. It swung shut in his face. The man drummed his fists on the door, his face, turned back toward the Ranger, a white blur of fear. And then the door was opening, and the man was falling inside.

There was no answering gunfire, and Jim knew why. Chuckling deep in his throat, he

set the rifle to his shoulder again and began to fire carefully and systematically at the crude 'dobe chimney which was belching its smoke up into the drifting canyon wind currents. Five bullets placed at the correct angles broke off a good amount of the chimney and dropped it, in big chunks, down the shaft. Soon there was no more smoke coming out of it.

"Bet there's plenty of smoke in that cabin," Jim mused. "When that busted 'dobe blocks that chimney the smoke won't have any place to go but inside that one-room cabin."

He sent another bullet into the door, then called out.

"Come on, one at a time! Hands up. Shell-belts off!"

He was answered by a hoarse curse. A gun shoved out of the window and sent a .45 bullet somewhere in his general direction.

Jim tried again. "There's a pack of boys from Trinidad trailin' me right now. When they get here we'll make a rush. You'd better save yourselves a necktie party. I'm a Ranger. I'll take you back to a trial in the Capitol. You know what some of those hotheads from town might do."

He let them chew that over for ten minutes. He knew their rat-minds would be conjuring up seven lassoes looped across a tree-limb and seven bodies—their bodies—dangling from the nooses. He sent another bullet at the cabin, driving this one through the window. A man screamed from inside the shack. Smoke came out. He heard them coughing and choking.

"You can't stand a siege," Jim shouted. "You held up that train yesterday and stole some ammunition. But I reckon you'd better take a look at what you got!"

There was a silence. Nobody swore or cursed. He knew then that the outlaws had already broken open the crates—and found the useless bullets. He touched the splintered wood in his pocket, and the grin spread on his face. That tantalizing thought that had kept eluding him was elusive no longer. Almost in shame he muttered to himself, "Dog-gone, I should have thought of it even sooner than I did. A man who uses bullets as much as I do! Those owlhoots down there all use .45 or .44 Colts. They have no more use for .32 calibre bullets than I have! And that's what they got in that train robbery! Bullets for the women folk at Fort Cobb to do a little ladylike shooting!"

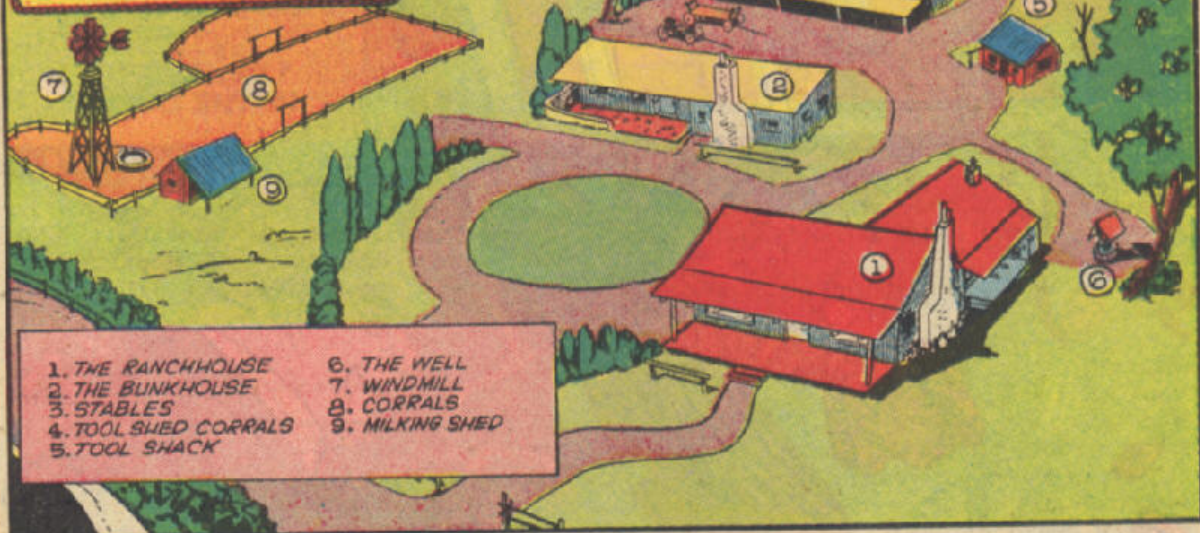
He took the little splintered piece of wood from his pocket and looked down at the .32 on it. He tossed it aside as the door below opened, and the six men came out unarmed, with their hands held high above their heads, tears from the thick smoke streaming from their eyes.

THE END



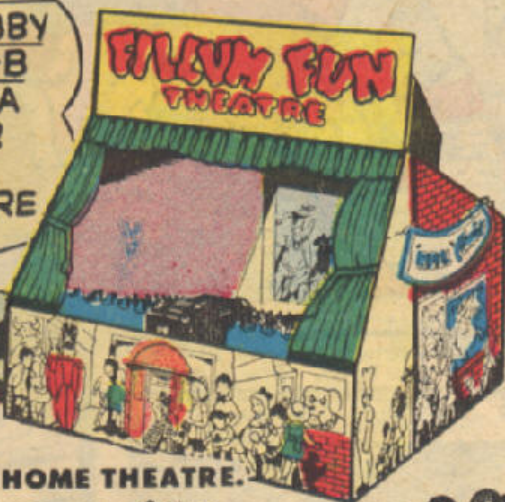
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TO LIVE OR TO DIE?  
THAT WAS THE GREAT  
GAMBLE! IT WAS ALL IN  
THE DECK—AND THE DEALER  
WAS THE CROKEDDEST,  
CHEATINGEST GAMBLER IN  
THE WEST! TIM HOLT HAD  
TO STAKE HIS LIFE ON THE  
TURN OF A HAND, EVEN  
THOUGH HE KNEW THERE  
WAS —  
**“ DANGER  
IN THE CARDS!”**



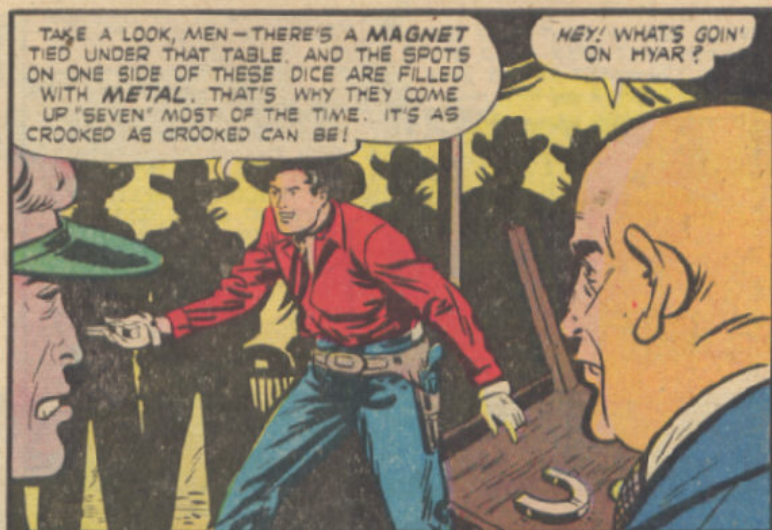


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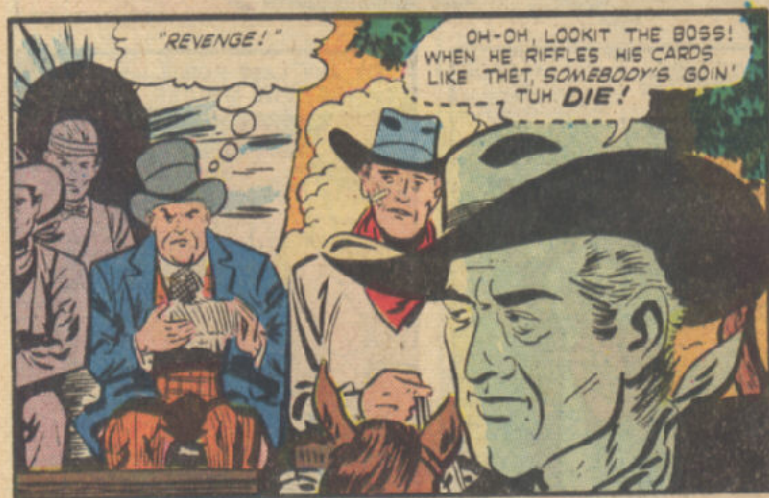


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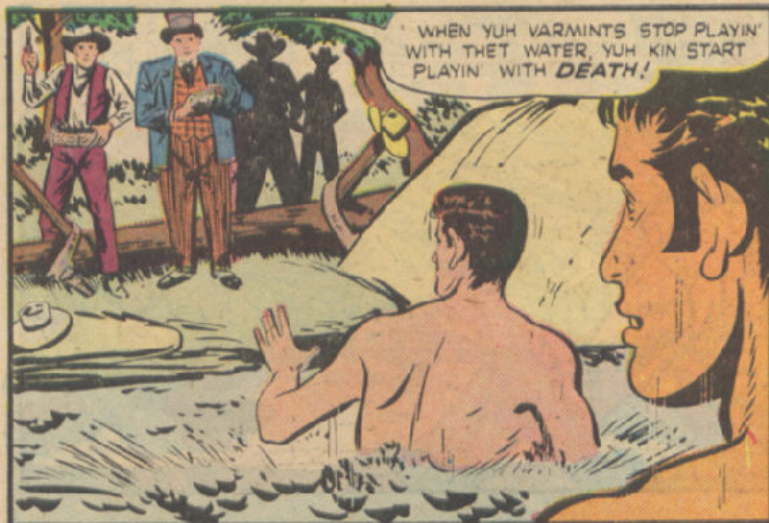


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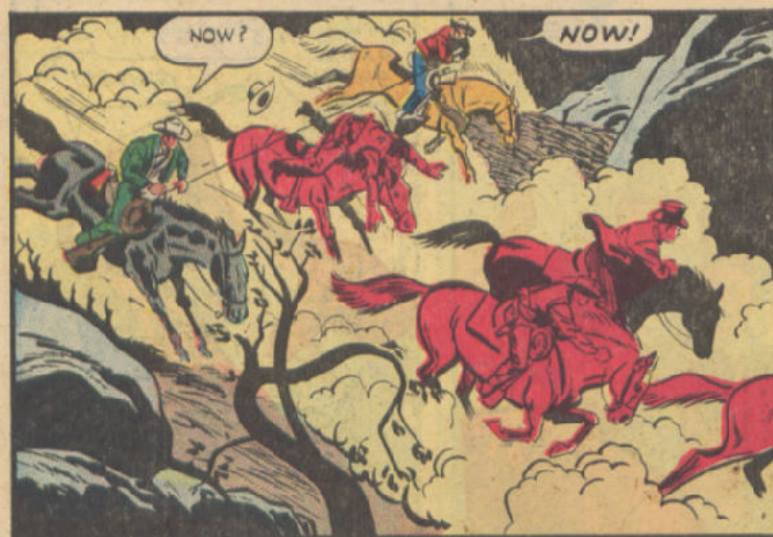


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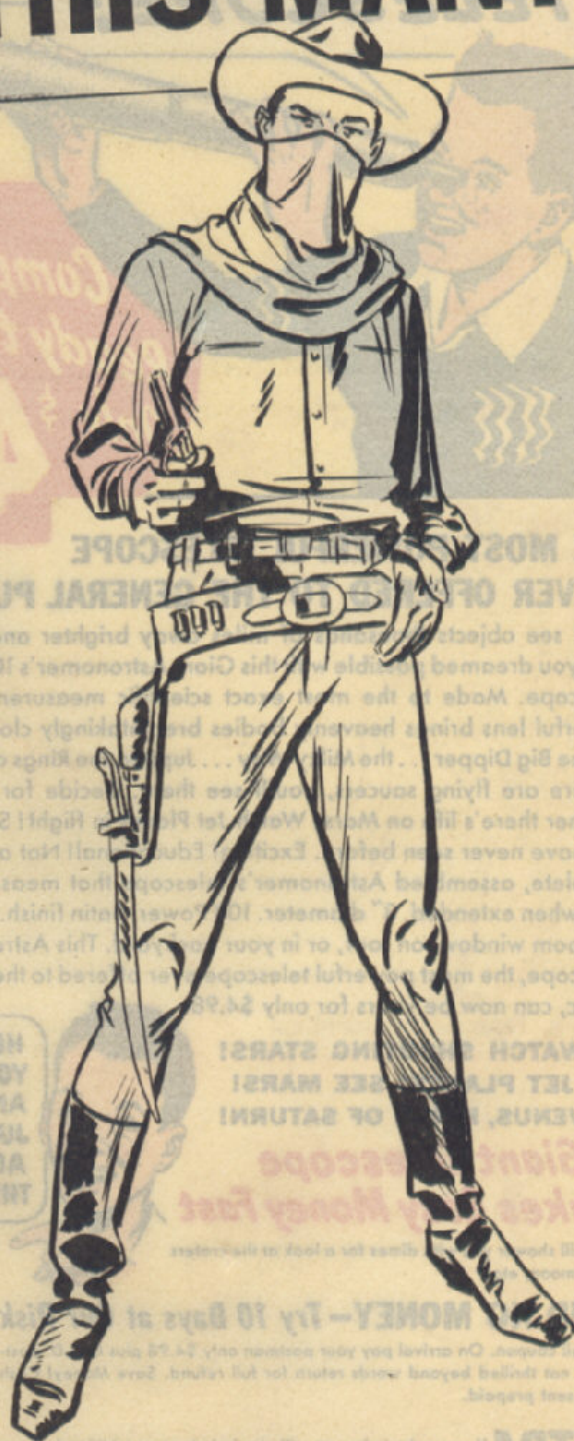


# TIM HOLT





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